



**Testimony in Support of SB 209, An Act Increasing Educational
Incentives in the Jobs First Employment Services Program
Public Hearing March 1, 2012
Submitted by Mary Pat Healy, Executive Director**

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The Bridgeport Child Advocacy Coalition appreciates the opportunity to submit testimony in support of SB 209, An Act Increasing Educational Incentives in the Jobs First Employment Services Program.

Unemployment in Bridgeport and other urban centers in Connecticut continues to be a pressing issue. In Bridgeport from 1990 to 2010, jobs decreased by 29%, but the size of the labor force increased by 9%. As of December 2011, 11.7% of Bridgeport's labor force – 7,487 residents – was unemployed. Bridgeport citizens desperately need jobs initiatives, like those proposed in SB 209, An Act Increasing Educational Incentives in the Jobs First Employment Services Program, that bring jobs training and educational incentives to the city.

Vocational education and attainment of a high school diploma are vital if people are to compete meaningfully in the job market. Virtually every job requires a high school diploma or its equivalent and vocational training is needed so that people are properly trained for the jobs that are currently available. We applaud the fact that participation in this program will be an allowable activity as part of the employment plan for TANF.

Programs like this can help the unemployed in cities like Bridgeport by providing them with a high school degree and much needed education and training so that they have a better chance at getting a job in the current economic climate.

We support SB 209 and encourage you to pass this legislation.